

REASONS

For Granting Letters of Mart to Trading Ships.

Humbly offered to the honourable House of Commons.

THAT the *French* King forces his Subjects Merchant Ships to take Commissions instead of denying them, and *Spain* and *Holland* grant them freely; being of Opinion, That they are serviceable to themselves and Allies, and hurtful to none except their Enemies.

That the *French* Letter of Mart Ships have done us more damage in our Trade than their Men of War; and such of our Merchant Ships and Gallies that have been so lucky to obtain Commissions, have done very good Service, by taking in the *Mediterranean* only many rich Prizes from the *French*, to the Value of at least One hundred thousand Pounds within these last Six Months.

That upon the Incouragement of having Letters of Mart, which were not denied till lately, the Merchants have built many very fine Frigats and Gallies, the better to annoy the Enemy, and secure their own Trade, which was before in a great measure lost in several Places, and now thereby partly regain'd; but should not the Commissions already granted, which are expired or expiring (for they last but for one Voyage, which is also esteemed hard) be removed, and new Ones granted to the Frigats and Gallies lately built, it will be a great Hinderance to their hopeful way of recovering our Trade, and also a Discouragement to the Merchants and Marriners.

That in regard Merchant Ships of all other Nations in War have Commissions, our Commanders and Sea-men are unwilling to go to Sea without being upon equal Terms with them: For without Commissions they dare not seize a *French* Ship, though she falls in their way, for fear of being afterwards retaken by the *French*, and hanged for Pirates. Besides, Commissions encourage the Men the better to defend their Ships; For who will fight, when if they should overcome they dare not seize?

That such Ships as have Commissions are obliged to give 1500 or 2000 *l.* Security to perform their Instructions, and particularly to carry one half of their Compliment Land-men, which raises a great Number of Sea-men for his Majesties Service; and their Prizes pay considerable Customs and Fifths to the Crown, besides the Gain it brings to the Concerned and Nation in general; for each Prize is a double Gain to us, in regard the Enemy loses as much as we get.

The Objection that hath been made against granting Commissions is, That some of these Commission Ships have committed Irregularities. To which is answered, That there hath been several hundred Commissions granted since the War, and its believed there never was fewer Irregularities committed by such a great Number of Ships as by those, if any at all. But with submission, suppose One in a Hundred of them have broken their Instructions, (though we know of none) it would be severe for all the rest to suffer for their Faults, when they may be so easily punished for it.